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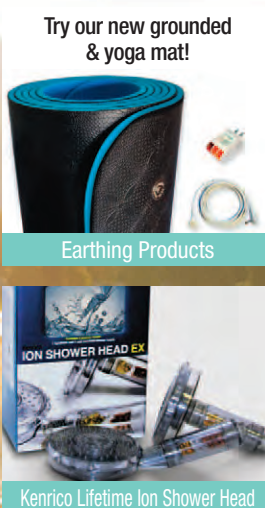


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All party Canadian delegation for Paris Climate Talks

The wheel of politics spun with various leaders, like horses on a merry-go-round, appearing in the lead...then the wheel stopped and Canada spoke for change. Now we can get real at the UN Conference on Climate Change Nov 30 - Dec 11, 2015 in France. Harper's nine-year train wreck did serious damage to Canada's reputation by sending hatchet men pimping for oil interests rather than humanity's. Now we can do better. We can cooperate and send an all-party Canadian delegation to Paris. Justin Trudeau, as our new Prime Minister, you have the authority to invite Elizabeth May, the dedicated

leader of Canada's Green Party, and Tom Mulcair, leader of the NDP and previously a Quebec Environment Minister, to join with your skilled MPs Joyce Murray and Stéphane Dion – both honourable environmentalists – to take back the mantle for Canada, as friends of the Earth. What a Dream Team for Canada, and the world! They all speak French and English, care deeply about our planet, are smart, and strong. Let's show Canada's creativity once again, and become world leaders in protecting the environment and rebalancing our share planet's climate. God speed to you all.

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Federal funding should support an accountable transit plan

by Elizabeth Murphy

As the new federal government considers going into debt to invest in transit, here are a few critical issues to consider.

Transit needs to be more affordable with more extensive coverage throughout the Vancouver region. Focusing on only a few transit corridors with very expensive mega-projects drains funding from the base transit needs of the network.

However, the public is being held hostage on transit funding until the mega-projects are built. We need affordable electric transit right now to deal with peak-hour demand.

The solution is obvious. Building a subway costs approximately \$250 to \$450 million per kilometre, streetcars \$30 to \$40 million per kilometre and electric trolley buses only \$1 million per kilometre plus \$1 million per double articulated electric trolley bus. Therefore, the electric trolley bus network should be used throughout the grid as a priority to disperse gridlock, using streetcar lines and subways only as we can afford them.

The City of Vancouver was designed as a transit-oriented city before the common use of the automobile. Within a five to 10-minute walk, each arterial supported our streetcar system, which was replaced by an electric trolley bus system in the 1950s. An expansion of the existing trolley buses now could eliminate diesel while providing more frequent rapid electric trolley bus service throughout the grid and reducing greenhouse gases.

Funding models are critical. Transit funding is expected to be split three ways between federal, provincial and civic levels. However, cities should not be required to pay for transit since they do not have the resources to do so. Only seven percent of the tax base goes to cities even though their citizens are primary contributors to the GDP.

Using carbon and gas taxes to supplement federal and provincial transit capital funding makes sense.

Public Private Partnerships (P3's) have been required as a precondition for senior government funding. A major drawback is that they privatize public assets in exchange for little or no public benefit, providing the illusion that P3's are less expensive for the public when this is not the case.

P3s keep some debts off the governments books, but the public is paying for them nonetheless. Governments raise capital debt financing at a lower rate than the private sector, so P3's offer no public cost benefits.

Another problematic funding model is what TransLink refers to as the "Hong Kong model" where development is used to fund transit.

This means that rather than developers paying the city Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) towards civic amenities to service the increased population (such as community centres, parks, daycare, etc.),

Transit needs to be more affordable with more extensive coverage throughout the Vancouver region. Focusing on only a few transit corridors, with very expensive mega-projects, drains funding from the base transit needs of the network.

funding from CACs would go instead to pay for transit. But transit is the responsibility of senior governments so this is a form of the downloading of financial responsibilities to cities.

It means that large Metrotown-scale tower developments get added as density bonuses in established neighbourhoods unsuited to their community character or plans. We need affordable transit solutions with plans that are democratically supported by the public and compatible with local community planning.

A Broadway subway would result in a concrete jungle of density-bonused towers in Grandview, Mount Pleasant, Kitsilano and West Point Grey to feed the growing foreign luxury condo commodities market while most of the region would continue with inadequate transit service.

Throughout Vancouver, excessive rezoning is already

supporting the kind of land speculation that makes housing less affordable. Large infusions of foreign capital investment disconnect the real estate market from the local economy, pricing local people out of the market. These housing forms that treat housing as a commodity rather than as a community contribute heavily to this.

Transit needs to service communities, not subsidize the development industry's towers.

A further concern is the accountability of TransLink. Ever since the province replaced municipal elected officials on the regional board with a provincially appointed board in the early 2000s, there has been controversy over TransLink's governance.

The failure of the transit plebiscite showed that changes are needed. But instead of returning to the regional governance model of elected members, the province has again filled the board with appointments. This is continuing in the wrong direction.

As previously reported in the *Vancouver Sun*, the provincial NDP's TransLink critic George Heyman has said the new appointments failed to address accountability of the TransLink Board. More elected regional governance is needed to make it effective and accountable.

Further, the *Sun* reported that one of the new appointees, former Police Chief Jim Chu, is in the current employment of a major local development firm. He has been named vice-president of special projects and partnerships for Aquilini Investment Group. Heyman has also raised the issue of conflict of interest: discussions that would happen at the TransLink board about future transit plans will certainly affect land values and development plans.

If more federal funding for transit comes to Vancouver, affordable solutions with the broadest network benefits should be the first priority before corridor mega-projects. This can only happen if democratic accountability is restored. Contact your newly elected federal MP to let them know your concerns. <

Elizabeth Murphy is a private sector project manager and formerly a Property Development Officer for the City of Vancouver's Housing & Properties Department and for BC Housing. info@elizabethmurphy.ca



Drug expiry dates – are they ever too old?

A little while ago I was talking to a physiotherapist who asked me if I was taking anything for some joint pain I was having. I pulled out a bottle of acetaminophen – also known as Tylenol – and she took the bottle from me.

“Alan,” she asked, with a bemused smile, “did you know these expired in May 2001?”

No, I didn’t. Shows how observant I am. Perhaps a 14-year-old bottle of Tylenol gives you some sense how infrequently I take the stuff.

It’s not the first time I’ve thought about the meaningfulness of expiration dates on our medications. Frequently, I wonder, “Does it make any difference taking drugs that are far past their expiry? And is it harmful to be swallowing medications that were made in the last millennium?”

Quick answers: probably not and probably no.

Health Canada requires drug makers to put expiry dates on their drugs, an acceptable precaution given that a drug’s ‘active’ ingredient may lose its potency over time. For some conditions, a drug’s potency is vital. The expiry date is the date by which a drug maintains its “labelled potency, purity and physical characteristics,” but it’s also “the minimum after which the manufacturer recommends that the drug not be used.” No one gives a maximum date.

From a merchant’s perspective, a short expiration date drives return customers. If your clients only use your product intermittently, expiry dates get them back to purchase more of the product. You often hear pharmacists and regulators hectoring about medication expiry dates, warning you in grave tones that you could be taking dangerous chances by swallowing expired drugs. Hmm, how true is that?

Phil Emberley at the Canadian Pharmacists Association in Ottawa answered some

of my questions on this issue. His association enforces “standards of practice” for pharmacists and one of those “standards” is that pharmacies are not allowed to sell expired drugs. While such policy is there to protect the sanctity of the drug supply, Emberley admits the science around expiry dates is weak. Some drugs definitely lose their potency or stability over time – “drugs like insulin or epinephrine,” he says. But I wondered about expiry date economics. If a manufacturer’s expiry dates are ridiculously short, is this not a handy way to ensure patients are maximally gouged?

“I won’t wade into that one,” says Emberley. Understandably, pharmacists lean to the side of caution because they don’t know how well patients store their medications – where exposure to heat and humidity could degrade the drug. If a drug is stored properly, in the container it came in and away from light, heat and humidity, do you need to worry about its safety if it sails past the “best before” date?

I managed to track down the one guy who would know. Lee Cantrell is the director of the California Poison Control Centre based in San Francisco and is one of only a handful of researchers in the world who have studied the potency issue around expired drugs. And when I say “expired,” I mean “very expired.” The drugs he examined for a 2012 study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* were 28 to 40 years beyond their expiry date.

He told me someone offered him access to a stash of unopened medications “squirreled in the back in a community pharmacy. As a scientist, I said, wow, this is a great opportunity to look at these medications to see if they could remain viable decades after they were produced.” He said he was never comfortable with the “relatively arbitrary process” used to dream up drug expiration dates and relished looking into the issue.

Mostly, it was the safety question that piqued his interest. He said he’d often get calls at the Poison Control Centre from people who discovered they’d accidentally swal-

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lowed an expired medication. “They’d freak out, saying ‘Oh my God, I just took an expired med, am I going to die?’”

His study looked closely at 14 expired drugs, 12 of which were “present in concentrations at least 90 percent of the labelled amounts.” This is considered the minimum “acceptable potency.” Basically, these decades-old drugs were as potent as the day they were manufactured; in fact, he found that those 12 medications “retained full potency for at least 336 months, and eight of these for at least 480 months.”

Lee Cantrell clearly doesn’t want people to think his research was an invitation to take expired medication. “That was not my conclusion at all. We didn’t study efficacy or safety, only potency,” he says.

Cantrell’s study was unique but tiny compared to what the US military did when it launched its Shelf Life Extension Program (SLEP) in 1986. Because the US government stores one of the biggest stockpiles of medications, it needs to know how potent those drugs are after their expiry dates. SLEP examined 122 different drugs past their expiry dates and found that almost 90% of them could easily have had their expiry date extended by a year. In fact, on average, they felt they could safely extend the expiry dates of those drugs by more than five years.

But there are caveats around this kind of research. The drugs in both Cantrell’s study and SLEP were stored properly, unopened, with both temperature and humidity controlled. And these were tablets and capsules, which remain stable much longer than drugs in suspension liquids.

The occasional pharmaceutical consumer might look at this and ask, “How much do those drug expiration dates really matter?” When a batch of yogurt or leftover pasta at the back of the fridge goes bad, your nose tells you, but with drugs, we have to take the manufacturer’s word for it.

One thing is clear: there is very little evidence that people can be harmed by taking expired medications. Anecdotes, however, are powerful. Every pharmacist in the world has had drummed into their heads a case study of expired tetracycline causing Fanconi syndrome in 1963. It should give one solace that, if citing a 52-year-old case study of an expired drug is the best they can do to scare you about the practice, it’s unlikely expired

medications pose huge safety concerns.

For me, the lack of documented harms tells me that when (and if) drugs degrade over time, they may become useless, but they probably won’t become toxic. Today, drug companies are required to test their drugs for stability and will state on the label if the product, once expired, is risky.

Is it possible the biggest harm from drug expiry dates is not health harm, but economic and environmental waste? When people are warned, time and time again, to discard their drugs once they’ve become expired, are they filling landfills to pollute the environment and wasting their (and our) money? Ditching good, but out-of-date, drugs probably costs all of us hundreds of millions of dollars every year, but what’s the solution? I’m not suggesting a revolt at the pharmacy; what I am suggesting is better independent research on expiry dates to ensure that Canadian consumers can have drugs with reasonable expiry dates informed by science, not marketing.

This might have resonance at the national level. Back in 2004 or so, public health officials in Canada started stockpiling huge batches of antiviral drugs Tamiflu (oseltamivir) and Relenza (zanamivir) in case of an influenza pandemic. Said pandemic didn’t materialize. The drugs were good for probably five years from the date of purchase. So, in my estimation, Canada is sitting on two federal stockpiles holding about \$150 million worth of antivirals and the provinces also hold hundreds of millions of dollars worth. BC’s alone is worth about \$35 million.

I tried hard, but no one at Health Canada could tell me when and if these drugs were expiring. Let me hazard an educated guess: they are almost all expired and by next year, 2016, the entire stockpile will be expired.

Does Canada throw away hundreds of millions of dollars worth of expired drugs or spend a bit of money to find out if they might be effective? We’ve got a new government that might be interested in this kind of public-interest research. Stay tuned on this one. ◀

Alan Cassels is a pharmaceutical policy researcher, an occasional swallower of expired acetaminophen and the author of a new book, **The Cochrane Collaboration: Medicine’s Best Kept Secret**.



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Help fight colds and flu with **Zinc**

by Dr. Mercola

Now that daylight is waning, cold and flu bugs are ready to jump on any warm body not armed with a strong immune system. With so many novel herbs and supplements on the market, it's easy to lose sight of the basics for robust immune defences.

One of those is the trace element zinc. Your body needs zinc every day in just the right amount because too much can be as harmful as too little. Your body has no way to store zinc so it depends on a daily supply through diet. Zinc is important for a number of life-sustaining functions, including:

1. Strong immunity.
2. Important component of the enzymes involved in tissue remodelling and prevention of cancer.
3. Maintenance of your mood, mental clarity and restorative sleep.
4. Prostate and intestinal health.
5. Senses of taste and smell.

Zinc is a constituent of at least 3,000 different proteins in your body and a component of more than 200 different enzymes. In fact, zinc is involved in more enzymatic reactions in your body than any other mineral. Zinc increases your production of white blood cells and helps them fight infection more effectively. It also increases killer cells that combat cancer, helps your immune system release more antibodies and supports wound healing.

Could you be deficient in zinc?

Mild zinc deficiency is relatively common, especially in infants and children, pregnant or breast-feeding women, the elderly, people with poor gastrointestinal absorption or bowel disease like Crohn's disease and for those eating vegetarian or vegan diets. A number of factors contribute to the overall problem of zinc deficiency:

Years of commercial farming practices, such as monocropping (planting large expanses of land with the same crop year after year), have left our soils deficient in natural minerals like zinc.

Certain drugs deplete your body of zinc, such as ACE inhibitors, thiazide diuretics and acid-reducing drugs like Prilosec and Pepcid.

Certain diets, such as vegetarian/vegan diets and high-grain diets, are low in bioavailable zinc and high in phytic acids, which further impair zinc absorption.

Mild zinc deficiency can lead to frequent colds and flu, chronic fatigue and poor general health. In your child, when growth and development are vitally dependent on good nutrition, inadequate zinc can result in mood disturbances, poor memory, impaired learning



and poor school performance. Zinc deficiency can also contribute to acne and poor eyesight. Chronic zinc deficiency can affect eyesight, taste, smell and memory. White spots on your fingernails can indicate you're not getting enough zinc.

Zinc is a key mineral for your immune health

If your body has inadequate zinc stores, you will experience increased susceptibility to a variety of infectious agents. Your white blood cells simply can't function without zinc. Zinc affects multiple aspects of your immune system, including neutrophils, natural killer cells, phagocytosis, cytokine production, antibody production and even gene regulation within your



Zinc increases your production of white blood cells and helps them fight infection more effectively.

It also increases killer cells that combat cancer, helps your immune system release more antibodies and supports wound healing.

lymphocytes. Zinc is involved in many basic cellular functions, including DNA replication, RNA transcription, cell division and activation and stabilization of cell membranes.

The research on zinc's effect on pathogens is a bit inconsistent, but many studies show a strong protective effect. Some studies show that zinc may reduce

the duration of your cold by 50 percent. The Cochrane Review [www.cochrane.org] found that zinc reduced both the duration and severity of symptoms of the common cold. And using zinc helped prevent colds, leading to fewer school absences and less antibiotic use by children. Zinc is the hallmark molecule for thymic proteins, which are immune substances made by your thymus gland. Without zinc, you lack this immune defence. Zinc salts are deadly to many pathogens. Viral gastroenteritis is slowed down by the ingestion of zinc due to direct antimicrobial action of the zinc ions in your gastrointestinal tract.

If you're pregnant, zinc is even more important

There is rarely a more nutritionally demanding time during a woman's life than pregnancy (and later breast-feeding) when the intake of nutrients from foods and supplements are needed not only to keep her body running, but also to nourish and support her rapidly growing baby. Because zinc is required for proper cell division, it is vitally important to get adequate zinc during this time. Low zinc levels have been associated with the following:

- Premature birth
- Low birth weight babies
- Growth retardation
- Preeclampsia

One study found that zinc supplementation in pregnancy resulted in babies with significantly larger head circumference and higher birth weight. Zinc has many other important functions in your body.

High grain diets directly linked to zinc deficiency

High grain diets can lead to a number of health problems, including severe zinc deficiency, which, in turn, can lead to rickets and dwarfism. According to nutrition expert Dr. Loren Cordain: "It is thought that the high levels of phytate in unleavened whole grain breads cause a zinc deficiency, which, in turn, is responsible



If your body has inadequate zinc stores, you will experience increased susceptibility to a variety of infectious agents. Your white blood cells simply can't function without zinc. Zinc affects multiple aspects of your immune system, including neutrophils, natural killer cells, phagocytosis, cytokine production, antibody production and even gene regulation within your lymphocytes.

for hypogonadal dwarfism, along with other health problems associated with zinc deficiencies. In Europe, where immigrant Pakistanis consume high levels of unleavened whole grain breads, rickets among their children remains a problem.”

Why is this? Grains are high in phytic acids (as are legumes, seeds, and soy) and phytic acids are known to impair your absorption of minerals such as calcium, iron, magnesium and zinc. People in Western populations most at risk are those with diets high in unrefined grains, legumes, soy protein and calcium and low in animal protein.

Protein assists with zinc absorption. Animal proteins increase zinc absorption in general. Vegetarian and vegan diets, often high in grains and legumes, contain more phytic acid and may increase your risk for zinc deficiency. This is just one of many reasons I don't recommend eating a lot of grains.

How to optimize your zinc levels

As always, it's best to optimize your nutrition by implementing a diet rich in whole foods to receive your zinc requirements. Animal products are by far the richest in dietary zinc... Oysters tip the scales at up to 182mg per serving!

If, for whatever reason, you are not getting enough zinc, or are a vegetarian... you may want to add a zinc supplement. But what kind of supplement should you take?

Chelated forms of zinc are better absorbed

There are a number of forms of zinc available on the market, some better than others. Your body does not easily absorb zinc unless the zinc is first attached to another substance. Chelation is a process sometimes used to attach zinc to other substances to make it more absorbable and bioavailable. In chelation, the organic molecules have been electrically charged, which allows them to attract the zinc. One advantage of chelated

forms is you won't get antagonism with calcium, which can be an issue for zinc salts, such as zinc sulfate.

Zinc sulfate is one of the inorganic forms of zinc, or zinc salts. These are not as biologically effective as chelated forms. Zinc sulfate can cause stomach irritation. Another inorganic variety is zinc oxide, which is the form of zinc used in many sunscreens.

Other good forms of zinc include zinc gluconate, which is made essentially by fermenting glucose, zinc acetate, made by combining the zinc with acetic acid and zinc citrate, made by combining the zinc with citric acid. It's advantageous to take a supplement with a variety of forms, if possible. The current RDAs for zinc are listed in the following table:

Age	Male	Female	Pregnancy	Lactation
6 mo	2 mg	2 mg		
7 mo-3yrs	3 mg	3 mg		
4-8 yrs	5 mg	5 mg		
9-13 yrs	8 mg	8 mg		
14-18 yrs	11 mg	9 mg	12 mg	13 mg
19+ yrs	11 mg	8 mg	11 mg	12 mg

These recommended doses are for elemental zinc and each form of zinc (zinc sulfate, zinc citrate, zinc gluconate, etc.) contains a different amount of elemental zinc. The amount of elemental zinc a supplement contains will be listed in the Supplemental Facts panel on the supplement container.

For example, approximately 23 percent of zinc sulfate consists of elemental zinc. Therefore, 220 mg of zinc sulfate would give you about 50 mg of elemental zinc. You must take this into consideration if you're going to use a supplement, as well as the fact that the

average person gets about 10 to 15 mg of zinc per day from the foods you consume. You will have to use your best judgment in determining if you are at the upper or lower end of that range, based on your dietary habits and supplement accordingly.

Too much of a good thing

Foods and medications can interfere with absorption so the timing of your supplement is important. For example, caffeine can interfere with zinc absorption of zinc by as much as 50 percent so you will want to avoid chasing down your supplement with a cup of coffee. By contrast, the amino acids cysteine and methionine improve zinc absorption, which means taking your zinc supplement with a high-quality whey protein would be a dynamite immune-boosting duo.

Although it is important to get adequate zinc, balance is key. Taking too much can also cause problems, although it generally takes fairly high doses over time to reach toxic levels. Chronically excessive zinc intake can suppress copper and iron absorption leading to deficiencies in those minerals.

In conclusion, zinc is an often forgotten nutritional staple to add to your flu-busting arsenal. It's inexpensive insurance that can stop those viruses dead in their tracks. In addition to making sure you're getting enough zinc, don't forget how important your vitamin D levels are for keeping you healthy this winter.



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GMO BITES

Study shows GE soybeans cause stunted offspring

Pregnant goats fed with genetically engineered (GE) soybeans have offspring who grow more slowly and are shorter, according to a new Italian study (Tudisco et al., 2015). Publishing in the journal of *Small Ruminant Research*, the researchers were testing the results of supplementing the feed of female goats with Roundup Ready GE soybeans, which are engineered to resist the herbicide Roundup and are sold by agribusiness giant Monsanto. They are some of the most widely grown soybeans in the world.

The reduced growth of the goat kids was attributed by the researchers to their observation that the milk of the GE-fed mothers was significantly less nutritious and contained less of the IgG antibodies important for early growth.

"This was a carefully conducted study," commented Dr. Judy Carman, director of the Institute of Health and Environmental Research, Australia. She was not involved in the research, but told *Independent Science News*, "The differences in the composition of the colostrum between the mothers fed the GE soy and the non-GE soy were particularly striking. The colostrum from the GE-fed mothers contained only 2/3 of the fat, 1/3 of the protein and close to half of the IgG of the mothers fed the non-GM soy."

Lower offspring weights were not the only unexpected findings. The researchers also found that the milk of GE-fed goats was lower in protein and fat.

To carry out these experiments, the researchers divided pregnant female Cilentana goats into four groups, 60 days before kidding. Two of the groups were fed goat food containing GE Roundup Ready soybeans (at two different concentrations). The other two groups were fed conventional (non-GE) soybeans, also at two different concentrations.

After the mothers gave birth, all offspring were fed only with their mother's milk for 60 days. The growth of these kids was measured twice. After both 30 days and 60 days, the kids of GE-fed mothers were approximately 20% lower in weight and shorter in stature. Both these differences were statistically significant.

Lower offspring weights were not the only unexpected findings. The researchers also found that the milk of GE-fed goats was lower in protein and fat. This difference in milk quality was large (6% protein in both GE-fed groups versus 18% in both non-GE fed groups) for the first few weeks after birth but gradually disappeared – even though the mothers continued to be fed the GE soybeans.

A third difference noted by the researchers was that transgenic DNA could be detected in the colostrum of most (10/16) of the GE-fed goats. No transgene DNA was detected in the milk of goats fed non-GE soybeans... This result is the strongest demonstration so far of altered growth and development in offspring of GE-fed mothers... "It is already known that Roundup Ready soybeans have various defects including a manganese deficiency. Yet regulators and GMO developers have continuously dismissed credible reports of GMO crops causing apparent harm to animals, from many different research groups," said Dr Allison Wilson of The Bioscience Resource Project. "Hopefully, they will not ignore yet another study."

Source: www.independentsciencenews.org, October 26, 2015. Jonathan Latham is the co-founder of the Bioscience Resource Project, which conducts independent scientific analysis of genetic engineering and its risks. www.bioscienceresource.org



PASTA LOVERS hate waste



Conservation in the kitchen

What we are learning about food waste is shocking and what we must do to overcome the challenge seems daunting. But there are examples of success to emulate. Metro Vancouver's Love Food Hate Waste campaign replicates a successful British campaign that has reduced household avoidable food waste by more than 20% since 2007. The goal is to reduce avoidable food and liquid waste in Metro Vancouver by 10% by 2018.

Do just one thing differently

The household habits with the greatest potential for reducing food and drink waste within Metro Vancouver homes are:

- meal planning/shopping
- portion sizing/leftovers

At first glance, these changes seem to demand a high level of commitment from people to adjust habits that may have been years in the making. And too much change can be overwhelming, leading to feelings of discouragement. The Love Food Hate Waste campaign offers stand-alone ideas and suggestions to reduce food waste – simple ideas anyone can adopt, linked to benefits they can appreciate, including a well-planned shopping list and the direct financial benefits of effective leftover storage tips. Residents discover the capacity to reduce waste without sacrificing time, money or their enjoyment of food. As awareness increases, people become more willing to adopt additional strategies and influence their households to do the same.

The metrics of food waste

How did we measure what we throw away? For one week in November of 2014, 500 households across the region recorded all of the food and liquids they disposed of and how they were disposing of it – food scrap bin, sink, garbage, toilet, backyard compost, other. Most importantly, they documented how much of that food and liquid waste was avoidable and why it was not eaten. Additionally, the contents of food scrap and garbage bins at 80 households were analyzed. This is what we learned:

Over half of the food and liquid we dispose of in our homes could have been consumed

All those bits of perfectly good food that we don't use add up to over 100,000 tonnes of avoidable food waste every year in our region. To put that in perspective, *every day* in Metro Vancouver, we waste:

- 16,000 heads of lettuce
- 40,000 tomatoes
- 80,000 potatoes
- 32,000 loaves of bread
- 55,000 apples
- 70,000 cups of milk
- 30,000 eggs

This wasted food costs a typical Metro Vancouver household about \$700 a year

Yet when we share this information, most people say it could not be happening within their homes. So the first challenge to reducing avoidable food waste is to make people aware it's even happening. Only then can the work of changing behaviour begin. *continued p.13...*

Metro Vancouver tackles food waste

Households in the Metro Vancouver region generate about 190,000 tonnes of food waste every year. Over half of that, just over 100,000 tonnes, is food, liquid and dairy waste that could have been consumed. Reducing that waste is key to meeting Metro Vancouver's waste diversion targets as well as our goal of a 10 per cent reduction in per capita waste by 2020. Food waste adds about \$700 a year to each household's grocery bill and that's just the tip of the iceberg. Costs not factored into our research include inputs like the water, electricity, fertilizer, soil degradation and labour to produce the food as well as the fuel to transport that food to global markets.

Metro Vancouver is a partnership of 21 municipalities, one Electoral Area and one Treaty First Nation that collaboratively plans for and delivers regional-scale services. Its core services are drinking water, wastewater treatment and solid waste management. Metro Vancouver also regulates air quality, plans for urban growth, manages a regional parks system and provides affordable housing.

Collaboration

Farm Folk – City Folk contributed their Food-Print Project materials to help us create our Shelf Life food storage resource. www.farmfolkcityfolk.ca

Canada Safeway is helping customers reduce food waste with in-store announcements that share our food storage tips. They are also sharing our tips with their Twitter and Facebook followers. www.safeway.com



Is soy safe?

Our September column on soy generated interest, letters and controversy. While considerable negative press about soy can be found on the internet and even in men's magazines, typically these arguments can be traced to groups that promote animal-based diets, convincing some to steer clear of soy and jump on the anti-soy bandwagon. Whereas certain individuals should avoid or limit soy due to allergies or severe thyroid problems, for most, soy foods are safe, nutritious and potentially beneficial.

Soy has a long history of use throughout Asia and among vegetarians worldwide. Two of the healthiest, long-lived populations – the Okinawan Japanese and the Seventh-day Adventists in Loma Linda California – are frequent soy consumers. If soy were dangerous, its effects would be reflected in the health and longevity of these populations. Soy has been extensively researched and about 2,000 new studies on soy are released yearly.

Soy's nutritional benefits are similar to those of other legumes although soybeans are higher in protein and fat and lower in carbohydrates. Soybeans derive about 25-38% of calories from protein, compared with about 20 to 30% for other legumes. Soy's protein content and quality are similar to that of animal products

Two of the healthiest, long-lived populations are frequent soy consumers.

and better than that of other legumes. While most legumes are low in fat (2 to 15% of calories), soybeans derive about 40% calories from fat, similar to many animal products. However, soy oils contain beneficial, rather than damaging, components and are mainly polyunsaturated, including omega-3 fatty acids. Soybeans are rich in fibre, B-vitamins (niacin, pyridoxine and folic acid) and minerals (calcium, iron, magnesium and copper). Calcium is added to enriched/fortified soymilk and tofu is commonly set with calcium; both are particularly high. For many years, experts thought iron was poorly absorbed from soy, yet recent evidence suggests absorption is quite high. When consumed with vitamin-C-rich fruits and vegetables, iron absorption is further enhanced. Nutrient absorption is further improved when soybeans are soaked or fermented.

Soy for men

No reliable, clinical evidence exists showing that soy lowers serum testosterone or exerts estrogen-like effects in men. Whereas evidence continues to mount linking meat with chronic disease, evidence is growing that soy can protect against prostate cancer, kidney disease, cardiovascular disease and male pattern baldness. As indicated in our September column, the scares about soy for men originated from two case studies in which men consumed 14 to 20 servings/day of soy and subsequently developed temporary health problems. Problems vanished when balanced diets were resumed. In contrast, two recent meta-analyses found no effects of soy protein or isoflavones on male reproductive hormones. Three clinical trials assessed effects of soy on sperm and semen and observed no adverse effects.

Enjoy soy in its various forms. Organic – which also means GMO-free in Canada – and fermented – such as tempeh or miso – foods are great choices. At the same time, much of the research showing favourable effects of soy was done on populations eating mainly unfermented soy milk, tofu and edamame. Three to four servings/day is a reasonable amount for adults and up to two servings/day for children. <

Vesanto and Brenda are BC dietitians: www.nutrispeak.com; www.brendadavisrd.com, becomingvegan.ca Email vesanto.melina@gmail.com

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Plenty of cooks in the kitchen

What makes this campaign unique is that we are crowdsourcing tips and solutions from people across Metro Vancouver. Ultimately, the goal is to facilitate a regional forum where residents and subject experts can share ideas and solutions that will help everyone love their food more and waste less.



Metro Vancouver's Love Food Hate Waste campaign replicates a successful British campaign that has reduced household avoidable food waste by more than 20% since 2007. The goal is to reduce avoidable food and liquid waste in Metro Vancouver by 10% by 2018.

As the campaign grows, additional resources will include "kitchen basics" to increase people's culinary confidence. Useful online tools include menus with serving-adjustable ingredient lists, short and easy video food tips and ongoing expert guidance from thought leaders in our region.

How do people feel about their food?

In addition to quantifying food and liquid waste, we asked people about their attitudes toward food. Most people enjoy making new things to eat (75%), enjoy cooking and preparing food (73%) and feel they are creative enough to make meals using random ingredients (63%). Only 15% reported that food is just fuel to live.

Why people waste food

- Limited advance meal planning.
- A desire to have healthy food choices for the family.
- Cooking too much.
- Children not finishing meals.
- Perceiving cost of food and drink

waste as minimal.

- Thinking it unnecessary to reduce food waste because of municipal food scrap collection programs.
- Not knowing how to reduce food waste.

Is the cost of food a factor?

Forty-one per cent of those surveyed indicated that the price of food meant they often didn't buy the food they wanted. In the UK, saving money by reducing food waste gave consumers more money to spend on higher-quality ingredients.

Where does food waste go?

- Thirty percent of food waste was still thrown into the garbage, in part because food scrap collection was not yet available at many multi-family complexes.
- Residents of apartments and town homes that had food scrap collection used their food scrap bins as much as the residents in detached homes.
- Fifteen percent, or 30,000 tonnes of food, liquid and dairy waste, is disposed of down sinks or toilets.

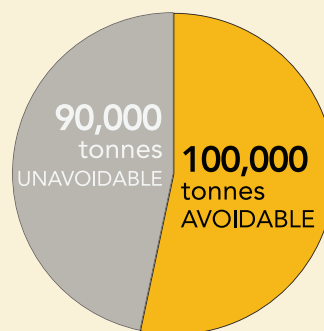
Measuring success

Metro Vancouver will repeat the kitchen diary research, pre-diary survey and waste composition studies in 2018 to confirm we've met our 10 percent reduction target.

Website and resources

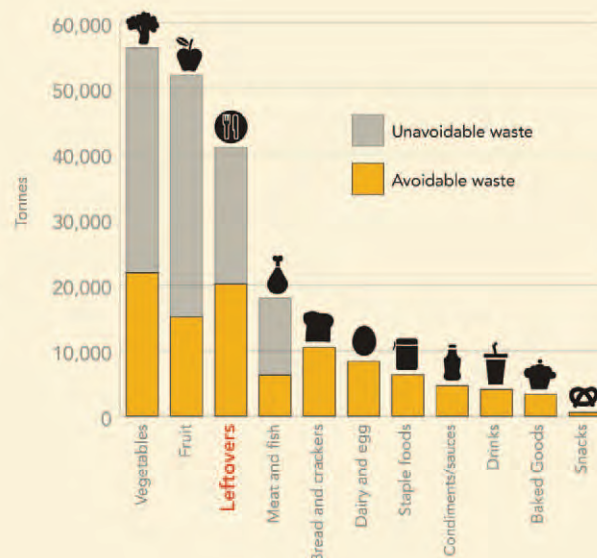
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50%
OF FOOD WASTE
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To put that in perspective, each day in Metro Vancouver we waste:

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40,000 tomatoes
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Kindling the native spirit

Finding your animal ally


by Denise Linn

Discovering the qualities of your animal ally

Different cultures assign varying meanings to totems. Trust your intuition to find the significance of yours. There are many books that list power animals and what they represent. Although these can be very useful, it's important to remember that this is only one person's or one culture's interpretation. Read the definition of your animal ally in the book and see if it *feels* right to you.

Your own sense of what a particular spirit animal means is unique and is more valid than anyone else's opinion.

The owl is a good example of these varying definitions. When I was in Western Australia discussing totems with Aboriginal elders, I was told that men feared the owl for it was a woman's totem and represented the darkness and the unknown. They said that as men were afraid of the power of women, they also feared the owl. In New Zealand, I discussed animal allies with members of the Maori tribe and asked about the owl. I was told that it was a sacred bird to the Maoris. It was so sacred that its name was never spoken. In my own Native American culture, some tribes revere the owl, saying that it represents deep wisdom, yet other tribes consider it the harbinger of death and darkness. The meaning for each ally can vary dramatically; therefore, it's crucial that you find the meaning of your ally for yourself.

Another way to discover what your totem represents is to read wildlife books, nature magazines and encyclopedias. Research the habits and habitat of the animals with which you feel a special kinship. For example, if you feel that the wolf is your ally, by researching their habits in the wild, you'll discover that they have a strong sense of family. Thus, having a wolf for your ally may increase your connection to your family. 

Excerpted from **Kindling the Native Spirit** by Denise Linn. (Hay House, November release.) Available in bookstores and at www.hayhouse.com, www.deniselinn.com

Denise Linn's personal journey began as a result of a near-death experience at age 17. Her life-changing experiences and remarkable recovery set her on a spiritual quest that led her to explore the healing traditions of many cultures, including those of her own Cherokee ancestors, the Aborigines in the Australian bush and the Zulus in Bophuthatswana. She is an internationally respected healer, writer and teacher and the author of more than 17 books.

In many native traditions, finding one's animal ally often involved a vision quest in nature. However, as we don't always have the opportunity to go on a quest, there are a number of other ways that you can find your spirit animal.

Think about what animal you are drawn to: You may find your power animal by noticing the animals to which you feel irresistibly drawn. It could be your favourite animal since childhood. Perhaps you've loved stories about cats and have always felt aligned with them – this might indicate that some kind of cat is your ally.

Watch your dreams: A totem may also appear repeatedly in a dream. Before you go to sleep, ask that your spirit animal appear in your dreams. Consider keeping a journal next to your bed so that you can record your dreams as soon as you awake.

Pay attention to the signs: Ask the Creator to give you a sign in regard to your totem. If an animal appears a number of times, especially in unusual ways, this most likely is one of your allies. For example, you receive a card with a horse on it in the mail. Then you begin seeing horses on posters and billboards. There's a song playing on the radio about a horse, as you're driving by a field

full of horses. If everywhere you turn, you see horses, there's a good chance that the horse is your totem.

Take the inward journey: One of the most powerful ways to find your spirit animal is to go on an inner journey (meditation). Imagine yourself in a mist and picture yourself reaching into the mist to touch your spirit animal. Imagine the mist thinning and "see"



In my own Native American culture, some tribes revere the owl, saying that it represents deep wisdom, yet other tribes consider it the harbinger of death and darkness. The meaning for each ally can vary dramatically...

what animal has appeared. You can even communicate with the animal to understand why it has come forward as your totem.

Spend time in nature: The traditional way to discover your totem is to spend time in solitude in nature and then notice the animals that show up. You can also watch the images in the clouds and even in the patterns on the bark on the trees to get clues as to your totem.



Hypnosis for relaxation and change

Peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble or hard work. Peace means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart. – Angel Chernoff

Many people suffer from sleep problems and/or anxiety. In many cases, they also complain of very busy minds, which they can't turn off along with their worry thoughts. Unless they are meditators, they do not realize we can learn to quiet our minds and tune into that place between or behind our thoughts.

Because of the rapid pace in our culture, many, if not most, people do not know how to truly relax. I increasingly see symptoms in younger people who have grown up with technology and who keep their cell phone at their fingertips. Something is always entering their consciousness via texts, emails, Twitter, Facebook and other social media. Before technology, there was much more quiet time. There was a time when stores were closed on Sunday. It was a much slower pace. It was easier to relax.

The kind of relaxation I am talking about here is not putting your feet up and watching a movie, but rather a scientific state of relaxation. I help my clients achieve this state through hypnosis, both in the office and by listening to my hypnosis CDs at home. Combined with cognitive behavioural therapy, this works very well. Essentially, we need to retrain ourselves to quiet the mind and calm the body. Look at how animals flop down like rag dolls after activity! We are part of the animal family and could do that too once.

The reason I use hypnosis is that it is hard, if not impossible, for us to put ourselves into a state of deep relaxation. Even meditators may find it hard to stop the thoughts. I think of it like this: the conscious mind is like a word processing program on a computer and the subconscious mind is like the hard drive. If there is a virus in your hard drive and you open a document and write, "clean up virus," nothing will happen.

You need someone with the technology to get into the hard drive, eliminate the virus, clean up the mess it made and perhaps even add or upgrade some programs.

I think of the tendency to worry or have anxiety like a virus in our hard drive. The hard drive is the operating system. It operates at the subconscious level. The technology to access and change it is hypnosis. Hypnosis creates a deeply relaxed state in which we can gain access to the subconscious, begin to eliminate the source of the problem and create new, positive programming.

Ultimately, we need to develop the ability to take charge of our minds and heal ourselves.

We know the body and mind are not separate. Everything is connected and the state of our mind can affect our health. Scientists have shown that the practice I have described lowers heart rates, blood pressure and oxygen consumption, which alleviates the symptoms associated with a vast array of conditions, including hypertension, arthritis, insomnia, depression, infertility, cancer, anxiety and even aging.

Anyone can learn the technique of hypnosis, but there are great variations in ability, technique and depth of knowledge and understanding so there is a need for discernment. If you are curious, see the sample clips at gwen.ca

Ultimately, we need to develop the ability to take charge of our minds and heal ourselves. This can be a good way to start. ◀

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist. For articles and information about her psychological services, books and hypnosis CDs, visit www.gwen.ca



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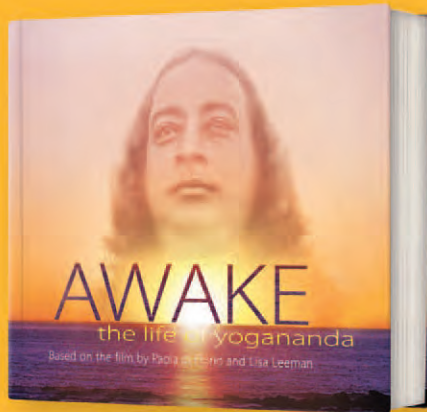
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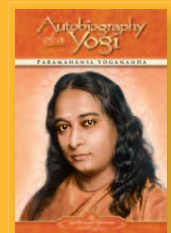
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StarWise

November 2015

ASTROLOGERS ARE a bit phobic regarding the defence of their chosen profession and they take strident measures to prove the validity of their sacred science. We just can't get any respect, especially from the scientific and business communities. I encountered a prominent scientist a few years ago at a garden party and when I told him I was an astrologer, he blinked so rapidly I thought he was going to pass out. I'm sure he thought I was pulling his leg with the outrageous prospect of actually being an astrologer. It was similar to the reaction one would get if they said they had spotted a Sasquatch.

So here I sit on Thanksgiving Day (October 12) pondering what to write about for November. I have taken a very long look at Stephen Harper's horoscope and the charts for Justin Trudeau and Thomas Mulcair. Trudeau is the only one with a valid birth time while Harper shows an exact midnight birth, which is dubious at best. It would be rare to be born right at the top of the hour and a few minutes of time can mean so very much in the accuracy of predicting events. Mulcair's birth time is not known and getting that information from a Scorpio is like trying to milk a dead cow. By now, the results are in and the world knows who is at the helm of Canada's top spot. Philosophically, I would like to see Trudeau run the show and shake things up. Interestingly, his chart shows a demarcation in how he runs his life. He is experiencing the Uranus opposition that occurs around 42 to 43 years of age. It indicates a time of revolution and dynamic change. Uranus happens to be passing over his Moon, which is another indicator that his life is in the midst of profound changes. Of course, if he is the new Prime Minister, his life will change dynamically and dramatically and his chart is indicating just that. Offering any type of prediction for Harper and Mulcair would be guessing at best.

On a completely different topic, Venus and Mars spend most of November moving through Libra. This is a great planetary combination for justice, balance, relationships, marriages, romance, love and all forms of creativity. Saturn and Neptune are 90 degrees apart, constituting a square aspect that will extend throughout most of 2016. It indicates a time of probable confusion and distortion – did I mention confusion? It may take us a while to get ourselves together and find our direction as a nation as we ponder our choice of bombs or extended arms.

Mac McLaughlin has been a practising, professional astrologer for more than four decades. His popular **Straight Stars** column ran in Vancouver's largest weekly newspaper for 11 years. Email mac@macsstars.com or call 604-731-1109.



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**ARIES** Mar 21 - Apr 19

Venus and Mars cast their glance from across the sky bringing excitement, challenge, change and romance. Wow, sounds like big fun! If you're already settled in, married or partnered up, this lively combination can spice things up. Aries' biggest danger is always boredom and restlessness and those two things are not on the cosmic menu.

**TAURUS** Apr 20 - May 21

It's time for a little soul searching. My bet is there's a whole lot of things to be soul searching about. Matters like shared monies, death and taxes, inheritances, health, work and career are just some of the topics that need your keen attention. Then again, it just might be time to let down a bit.

**GEMINI** May 22 - Jun 20

The full Moon on November 25 will illuminate your inner horizon in order for you to see what is what and what must be done in order to set the ship on a steady course. Resources may be a bit tight and other problematic areas need attention. Not tension, but redirection, and planning and balance are called for.

**CANCER** Jun 21 - Jul 22

The first half of the month runs a little smoother than the second half. Mercury and the Sun cast triangular energies your way providing inspiration. The crab spends a lot of time in the surf dealing with the ever-changing tides. Ride the waves and continue to adapt and adjust to what comes your way.

**LEO** Jul 23 - Aug 22

The skies brighten in late November after a dreary start to the month. You may ponder a major relocation or spiritual direction. Relate, communicate and negotiate are the keys to finding your way into the future. Going over the past regarding family – and especially children – may take up some of your time and energy.

**VIRGO** Aug 23 - Sep 22

The skies brighten in late November after a dreary start to the month. You may ponder a major relocation or spiritual direction. Relate, communicate and negotiate are the keys to finding your way into the future. Going over the past regarding family – and especially children – may take up some of your time and energy.

**LIBRA** Sep 23 - Oct 22

Venus and Mars live up the place as they move through your sign most of the month. Romantic and creative energies are high and it is time for you to do your thing. It may not be all roses and lollipops and there might even be a few bruises – and you may not mind.

**SCORPIO** Oct 23 - Nov 21

The new Moon on November 11 heralds a new start in a new direction. You may be honing your skills and regathering your confidence as you shake off Saturn's heavy lessons of the last few years. Time heals everything and it just gets better as we move towards year's end. Your star is shining again.

**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22 - Dec 21

The full Moon on November 25 is important and significant. It will help you get in touch with many factors of your life. The areas that need the most work will be illuminated strongly, such as career objectives or limitations. It's not a Sagittarius thing, but you may have to learn to economize, strategize and compromise.

**CAPRICORN** Dec 22 - Jan 19

Pluto's presence may be felt rather strongly. He has a profound effect when he moves through your sign. Pluto will be in Capricorn until 2024. He bestows great power and wealth, but he can bring our ruination if we abuse his powers. Humility and compassion are the right ingredients, while dominance and control ruin everything.

**AQUARIUS** Jan 20 - Feb 19

Your career sector gets a boost as the Scorpio new Moon on November 11 unfolds its power across the top of your solar chart. Venus and Mars lend a hand as well as they cast positive triangular energy into your sign most of the month. Saturn also helps in stabilizing the ship.

**PISCES** Feb 20 - Mar 20

It might be time for a career change or there may be honours coming your way for work well done. I guess honours can give a boost to your career anyway. Lord Jupiter casts very supportive energy as well, practically ensuring a breakthrough or some sort of fortuitous timing of events. Move forward with confidence.

ChooseNews protecting children from sensationalized bad news



Murder
Terrorism
Bombing Gun
Crash Accident Attack
Fire War Knife
Death Rape
Kidnapping

Every day, children and toddlers face the risk of trauma – in their homes, in vehicles, at daycare centres and during play dates. It derives from a source that can't be felt, but which can be seen and heard every hour on the hour. I'm talking about radio and TV newscasts that consistently serve up a diet of murder, mayhem and grue. Day in and day out, the diet is mainly "bad news," carefully scripted and read aloud by authoritarian newscasters, designed to hook our attention.

The neural development of children younger than seven is still incomplete and while they can't fathom the complexity and nuances of the news, they certainly absorb it. Over time, a steady diet of bad news that sensationalizes violence can deeply interrupt a growing child's sensibilities and emotional and cognitive functioning. Worse yet, it can produce anxiety and depression and initiate learning disabilities.

I wanted to do something about it so I launched Choose News (www.choosenews.org), an advocacy project to raise awareness of the health impacts of bad news on children and to urge Canadian broadcasters to change the way they format and deliver news.

Violent media leads to aggression

Research tends to agree with the proponents who argue that violent media is associated with aggressive behaviour. Risky behaviour by children and young adults can include violence against others and lack of remorse for consequences. The type of faulty thinking creates stressors in children, which can lead to the onset of many different symptoms. Children who view media violence are more likely to have increased feelings of hostility and decreased emotional response to the portrayal of violence and injury that lead to violent behaviour through imitation.

Source: www.allpsych.com

How did this happen?

In 1993, violence guidelines were created for broadcasters to follow with regard to unrelenting, bad news newscasts. However, these guidelines are voluntary and don't reflect the sensitivities of the youngest segment of their audience – children and toddlers. More importantly, perhaps, mainstream broadcasters have honed a business model that sensationalizes violence to earn more money. That children might be harmed by this business model seems of little consequence to broadcasters.

Children and toddlers who have neither the developmental capacity to discern the implications of bad news nor the means to control newscast(s), should not be at risk of emotional impairment every time their parents flick on the radio or TV to track news, weather, sports and traffic updates. In fact, it should be the constitutional right of families to listen or watch newscasts without such risk.

It's time for public and private broadcasters to change their business model. Our society protects kids at skating rinks, ski hills and skate parks. They're also protected from noxious substances like cigarette smoke. Now it's time to do the same for children who are a captive audience to sensationalized, negative newscasts.

I'm going to concentrate my efforts on this project for the foreseeable future and I hope you will consider joining with me. Together, we can turn bad news into good news for our children.

For more information, check out www.choosenews.org and also our petition at www.change.org: Tell the CRTC and Canadian broadcasters to reduce violent content of TV and radio news. ☒

Michael Maser is a passionate, innovative educator, researcher, curriculum developer and author. Frustrated as a classroom-based teacher, he helped found and direct the award winning, innovative SelfDesign and Virtual High Learning Communities. www.michaelmaser.net



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Democracy for all Canadians

I've lived through many elections, but I don't recall many in which emotions ran so high. In the heat of such a campaign, things get said, disagreements arise and tensions increase. Now that we've elected a new government, I want to commend Prime Minister-designate Justin Trudeau on his positive campaign and congratulate him on his party's sweeping victory. I still think the new government has an opportunity to strengthen its climate change policies, but more on that later.

We also have to thank the people from all parties who have devoted so much time, energy and money to serve the country, from the candidates, successful and not, to the volunteers, who believe enough in this country and its democratic traditions to give their all. Their families also deserve a lot of credit. Whether or not we agree with a candidate, leader or party and their policies, we can be grateful that they dedicate themselves to keeping our country strong and free.

Most of all, I want to commend Canadians. Voter turnout jumped to more than 68 percent – not perfect, but better than in some time. Canadians sent a loud and clear message that they want to live in an open, progressive country that promotes diversity, social justice, environmental protection and respect for First Peoples.

Those of us who work in the environmental movement look forward to a renewed relationship with our federal government. We know our elected representatives won't always agree with us, but we're hopeful our new leaders will give us a fair hearing and respect that we're all trying to contribute to making Canada a positive example for the world.

The new government has its work cut out. On top of initial administrative duties, dealing with trade agreements and appointing Cabinet members, it will also be expected to prepare for the UN climate summit in Paris in December. As some people know, during the lengthy campaign I had a disagreement with Trudeau over his par-

ty's climate policy. I still think his climate plans need to be strengthened, especially with clear and ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. But I'm confident the new government will take this issue seriously and I hope it will draw on the expertise of other parties and their leaders, who offered innovative proposals.

I also hope they will consult with experts from the David Suzuki Foundation and other organizations, who have been researching and proposing viable solutions for many of the environmental challenges Canada faces, including ocean health, species and habitat protection, toxins and pollution and clean energy and climate change.

No one is suggesting we should do an immediate 180-degree turn on resources and economic priorities. But it's time to shift our thinking. Continuing to make fossil fuel extraction the country's economic priority is a thing of the past. We can create more

Canadians sent a loud and clear message that they want to live in an open, progressive country that promotes diversity, social justice, environmental protection and respect for First Peoples.

jobs and a stronger economy by ending fossil fuel subsidies, putting a price on carbon pollution, promoting energy conservation and encouraging the clean technology and clean energy sectors.

We must also remember that the government is here to represent the interests of all Canadians – and not just those who voted for it. We're the ones most affected by government policies. Corporate interests are important, but they should never outweigh the interests of citizens.

So many Canadians got engaged with this election, holding conversations, watching debates, sharing information on social media and through letters to newspapers, volunteering and, finally, voting. The government has its work cut out, but so do we. A democracy is as strong as the people who make its values come alive, every single day. It's not all up to the politicians. It's up to all of us to stay engaged, ensure our interests are looked after and work with people of all backgrounds and political stripes to make sure Canada continues to be strong, prosperous and free, with respect for diversity and the progressive values that have made Canada one of the best places on Earth to live.

There's a lot of work ahead for all of us. But right now, I want to say how proud I am to be Canadian, to live in a country where people care enough to make it work. ☒

Dr. David Suzuki is a scientist, broadcaster, author and co-founder of the David Suzuki Foundation. Written with contributions from David Suzuki Foundation senior editor Ian Hanington. Learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org

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Mainstream media the big election loser



photo by Victor Anthony

“Anybody” won the federal election – as in “Anybody but Conservatives” (ABCs) and “Anybody but Harper.” But almost everybody lost something. The Greens were temporarily stunted and shunted and the NDP either misread or misplaced their ticket to “destiny.” Ultimately, we avoided a Conservative train-wreck, relieved to have less baggage to claim. First-class passengers either jumped early or were thrown off a switched track to a changed landscape along a transformed national information railway. The corporate media – a big loser – appears to have been left back at the station, diminished and even disgraced in some eyes, certainly increasingly irrelevant and ignored.

I’ve never paid for a *National Post*, including October 17th’s last-ditch, pre-election keeper, handed out in the hotel where I was staying. “The Case for Harper” headline shouted below a sketched portrait of the man, airbrushed in the style and content now abandoned by *Playboy* magazine. A deceptive “Canada’s Team” Blue Jays promo, emblazoned on top, championed another hoped-for cause. Far beyond an endorsement, the entire first section was full-blown propaganda, up until the last sentence on Page A17: “We really cannot have another four years of government by a sadistic Victorian school-master,” wrote our best-known former press magnate, arch-Conservative, ex-con and ex-owner, Conrad Black.

I saved that copy, but not the ubiquitous other samples from Canada’s largest newspaper publisher, including more than 50 Postmedia rags, big-and-small city editions in every market outside Atlantic provinces. More than half of Canada’s English-language newspapers were wrapped, garbage-like, in yellow, costly front-page ads. The headline, “Voting Liberal will cost you,” was one message among many, previously considered unprintable, if not unthinkable. They must have missed the memo we don’t like to be told how to vote.

The bleak news tsunami – which went against the tide of public opinion – included the unprecedented, bizarre endorsement by the *Globe and Mail*, which touted the Tories, but not Stephen Harper. Few were fooled by the absurd, almost farcical, cheer-leading. Tweets included, “Globe endorses BLT: hold the bacon, hold the lettuce, hold the tomato,” “Gone without the Wind,” “Seinfeld, without Jerry” and “Globe, without the Mail.”

As the election fog lifted two days later, at a Postmedia shareholders’ meeting, a net loss was announced for the quarter ending August 31st, of \$54.1 million, compared to \$49.8 million for the same period in the prior year. Black spoke to the slow learning old boys who hadn’t been enlightened by the goofy endorsement of right-wing Jim Prentice in the Alberta election. He pleaded with shareholders, suits and deaf hedge funds, now in control of Postmedia, “Please return to quality,” in a bid to counter plummeting cash, credibility, brand value and a tenuous, almost irresponsible, grasp of new reality.

The same mainstream media that played a near-consensus role in the 2011 Conservative majority – shilling for a leader who insisted it was a “Harper government” rather than a government of Canada, during a campaign he foolishly characterized as “not all about him” – failed miserably in their fundamental responsibility to truth and credibility.

In contrast, the *National Observer* is part of a growing news alternative. Contributing editor Sandy Garossino’s October 18 opinion piece on corporate newspaper collaboration argued, “The stain of this shameful moment in Canadian journalism will never wash completely clean from the *Globe and Mail* and Postmedia. Not only did they tolerate the ugliest political episode in Canada’s post-war era, they signed their names to it. They sold their front page to it.”

In *Common Sense Canadian*, Rafe Mair added, “The news is going to come strained through the establishment sieve and we must all know that and take the credibility of all the mainstream media as one would a declaration of innocence by a child with sticky fingers and jam all over his face.”

Truth may be slightly more accessible now and somewhat easier with a PM who not only doesn’t duck hard questions, but also acknowledges that’s the job of journalists. Justin Trudeau promised, “I’ll be back” – after host-

ing what is only the third press conference in the press theatre in a decade – to a pack that had taken it on the chin, sucker-punched and conned into throwing the game.

In the meantime, the Centre for Law and Democracy, in co-operation with Madrid-based Access Info Europe, reported that Canada’s standing in Freedom of Information legislation – a world leader when introduced in 1983 – has “stagnated and sometimes even regressed,” falling to 55th place of 93 countries, behind Mongolia and Colombia.

The neglect and wilful destruction of the Commons will be uncovered and faced by our new government after – hopefully and blissfully – our last first-past-the post election. The mess and rot extends far beyond the

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barely inhabitable 24 Sussex Drive. Take your pick: war, the TPP, growing inequality, Bill C-51, C-24, last-minute cushioning of climate change, tardily transitioning to clean energy, restoring Canada’s tarnished image, rusted infrastructure, tattered social safety net, and on and on. It’s a long, hard to-do list. But a torch is being passed, a light in a tunnel in which corporate media crashes and burns while more Canadians – including additional youth and First Nations – vow to hold feet to the fire.

“Sunny ways, my friends,” says the promising PM. Hmm.

A broader, wider, better vision and aim are being set, beyond the spectrum and coverage of politics as usual. Cyberspace beats column space. Obsessing over races, voodoo fast-food polls and staged TV drama is becoming as passé, laughable and recognizable as tax mantras, economic mumbo-jumbo and toxic partisanship. Finally dumbed down to the point of a TKO. Debunked and de-railed.

“Read all about it” in independent media. Please support “news that’s fit to print.” ■



the Temple of Abstraction

by Geoff Olson

In the splendid 2015 Pixar film, *Inside Out*, the characters Joy and Sadness momentarily get trapped inside Abstract Thought, a building complex inside the mind of 11-year-old Riley Anderson. The panicking pair break down into blocky Picasso-like structures, and are reduced to simple geometric forms before a narrow escape pops them back into shape.

Abstract thinking has allowed human beings to make great discoveries, amazing machines, and astounding works of imagination – including computer-generated films like *Inside Out*.

Human beings, born utterly defenceless at birth, are the ultimate generalists. What we lack in biological specialization, we make up for in scientific specialization. We have become the Earth's apex species through abstraction.

The base-10 mathematical system was abstracted from human hands, and “slipped from the fingers that described it, becoming applicable to anything... Substituting numbers for objects changed the world, for better or worse,” notes Daniel Tammet in his 2013 book, *Thinking in Numbers*.

Through observing and measuring, generations of scientists tore apart the claustrophobic heavens of medieval scholastics to reveal an unimaginably immense cosmos of great age. They discovered shape-shifting entities in the microworld – as bizarre as anything from the world of myth – and made them dance through logic gates in our consumer electronic devices.

In modern times, money is so thoroughly abstracted from any real-world referents – including precious metals that theoretically back its worth – that commercial banks regularly create electronic credit through mere keystrokes. And on the world's stock exchanges, algorithms perform trades in microseconds, with valuation represented by a ghostly stream of electrons.

The word “abstract” is of Middle English origin, derived from Latin *abstractus*, literally meaning “drawn away.” It has a secondary meaning of “extract, isolate, separate, detach.” Is it any surprise that the nations of the industrialized west are now

populated with abstracted, isolated workers hooked on antidepressants and electronic distractions? (Distract is a close etymological relative to abstract, from the Latin *distract* – “drawn apart.”)

“What is abstraction?” asks *Adbusters* publisher Kalle Lasn in his 2006 cinderblock of a book, *Design Anarchy*:

“The utopian realm of pure form
Universality of expression, of emotion, of thought
The hue of infinity
A glimpse into the spiritual structure of nature itself
The culmination of thousands of years
of human aesthetics

A fear of death
The loss of empathy
An escape from nature
A form of ecocide through wilful ignorance
The incestuous victory of the single-minded logic freak
The fatal flaw of Western civilization...”

All of the above, perhaps? Writing by the Yellow River in 1895, French philosopher Paul Valéry recorded an imaginary dialogue with an Eastern sage.

“You have neither the patience that weaves long lines nor a feeling for the irregular, nor a sense of the fittest place for a thing...For you intelligence is not one thing among many. You...worship it as if it were an omnipotent beast...You are in love with intelligence, until it frightens you. For your ideas are terrifying and your hearts are faint. Your acts of pity and cruelty are absurd, committed with no calm, as if they were irresistible. Finally, you fear blood more and more. Blood and time.”

If there can be said to be a global fundamentalist religion in today's world – and I think of fundamentalist religion as a body of superstitious beliefs safeguarded by emotional resistance – then it would be popular idea of science as the final guide to truth and progress.

Consider “big data” and its supposed promise of

liberating human beings through numbers harvested from computers. The faithful believe that identifying previously unseen patterns in this Himalayan range of bytes will translate into greater health and prosperity for consumers, even while such quantification offers darker possibilities for the surveillance state.

I call it the ‘Temple of Abstraction.’ And as with all churches, membership has its privileges for those who have drunk the communion wine.

Consider, for example, the recent projections of the economic ‘worth’ of ecological services performed by the environment. Economists believe they can put a dollar number on watersheds, bogs,



Is it any surprise that the nations of the industrialized west are now populated with abstracted, isolated workers hooked on antidepressants and electronic distractions?

rivers and forests. The financial value of water filtration, pollination, the breakdown of vegetable matter into soil – pretty much anything nature does that benefits human beings – can be valued in millions to trillions of dollars, depending on the area and service examined.

These econometric studies might as well be elaborate jokes told by a drunken prof in a university pub. It's the economy that is embedded in ecosystems, not the other way around. Such studies indicate how far we have become “isolated, separated, and detached” from the wilderness within and without.

On the charitable side, you could read this as progress of sorts, a retreat from interpreting nature as an easily ignorable “externality,” as defined by classical economists. Yet the ultimate value

continued p.30...

Scientist, naturally

Ian McTaggart Cowan

– the man who hired David Suzuki

Ian McTaggart Cowan (1910-2010) revolutionized the way North Americans understood the natural world. Known as the “father of Canadian ecology,” he was no stranger to the suppression of scientists or to challenging pipelines, hydro projects, pesticides and industrial logging – all before most of us were even born. He pioneered nature television in its very earliest days and later hired David Suzuki who went on to narrate the Nature of Things. From his formative years roaming the mountains around Vancouver looking for venison to his last years co-editing the voluminous and authoritative Birds of British Columbia, Cowan’s life provides a unique perspective on a century of environmental change – with a critical message for the future.

In the opening pages of his 1956 handbook *The Mammals of British Columbia*, Ian McTaggart Cowan encouraged us – his readers – to join him in “unravelling the innermost secrets of the lives of mammals.” *The Real Thing: The Natural History of Ian McTaggart Cowan* is a continuing invitation to reveal not only the innermost secrets of the lives of animals, but of the man himself and the lives of his gentle, paradoxical and radical cohort of naturalists who influenced British Columbia in more ways than I ever imagined before starting this project...

When he started at UBC in 1940, not one province in Canada had a core biological staff for wildlife management. By the mid-50s, two-thirds of the provinces had wildlife biologists and most of them were Cowan’s graduates. Demands for his time as a popular lecturer were also exploding. Soon after returning from Scotland, he reported first to his base – the men on the ground in the wildlife profession – on his findings from Europe. His lecture outlined the limitations of privatized models that relied exclusively on the farming of game animals and eliminated natural ecosystems. He pointed out that legislators had failed to protect wild birds flying between countries. As he observed about a troubled post-war Europe, “They

He warned of the impacts of hydrocarbons, DDT amongst them...Cowan told his audience that these chemicals are as “capable of profoundly altering the environment more rapidly, thoroughly and insidiously than ever before,” and that the corporations or “rival chemical concerns [are] so strong that demand can be created before sufficient time has been allowed for proper appraisal.”

cannot get together on anything else, so you would hardly expect them to get together on waterfowl.”

In an address to the same group in 1955, he warned of the impacts of hydrocarbons, DDT amongst them. Like Spencer and Buckell’s warnings 10 years earlier, Cowan told his audience that these chemicals are as “capable of profoundly altering the environment more rapidly, thoroughly and insidiously than ever before,” and that the corporations or “rival chemical concerns [are] so strong that demand can be created before sufficient time has been allowed for proper appraisal.” In a more personal plea to North American scientists, including the ‘B’, he had this to say during the winter solstice of 1955, when he was made head of the Wildlife Society:

“To gain support for our cause, we have emphasized the economic values



Cowan (right) with CBC film crew, filming for his television series *The Living Sea*, a precursor to the *Nature of Things*. Photo by UBC Dept. of Extension, 1955

it represents and have soft-pedalled the great intangible forces of recreating the human soul, because we have not known how to talk about them in words of mutual understanding. We have stood tongue-tied in the presence of the dollar.”

Cowan saw the “presence of the dollar” gathering on all fronts, especially in the rapidly urbanizing Fraser delta... In many cases, the fauna of the localities Cowan worked in have indeed vanished and his journals are poignant *continued p.30...*

Book launches

The Real Thing: The Natural History of Ian McTaggart Cowan by Briony Penn

Nov 3: Saltspring Island, Artspring, www.artspring.ca

Nov 7: Vancouver, Beaty Biodiversity Museum, UBC
www.beatymuseum.ubc.ca

Nov 18: Victoria, Royal BC Museum, www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca

Other launches: www.cowantherealthing.com/book-launch

UVic digital collection of journals

www.uvic.ca/library/featured/collections/bc/Cowan.php



The TPP and Internet censorship

Trudeau's first big test as Prime Minister

Do you squeeze oranges expecting apple juice? Of course not. So Canadians shouldn't be surprised when an undemocratic process like the secretive Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations yields an undemocratic result.

On October 5, just two weeks before the recent federal election, beaming Trade Ministers from the 12 TPP countries gathered in Atlanta to announce they had completed negotiations on the largest and most secretive trade agreement in modern history.

Now, the TPP looks like it's becoming the first major test for the new Liberal government. Although the previous government signed Canada on to the deal, it must still be approved by the recently elected new Parliament.

Despite the fact that negotiations were ongoing for over three years, most Canadians knew nothing about the agreement and the announcement from Atlanta came as big news. Even those of us that have been following the process closely have little information on the TPP's contents. Of its 29 chapters, we have only seen three – and only because they were leaked and published by Wikileaks.

So here we are, being told by political leaders that we must be a part of this agreement, as there is “simply too much to gain for Canada.” But if we have so much to gain, why did the previous government wait until the last possible moment to pitch us the plan and then keep it under wraps throughout the recent election?

The few who have read the leaked texts know exactly why: Canadians would never accept the TPP if we knew what was being negotiated on our behalf.

Despite vowing to release the full text before the election, Trade Minister Ed Fast reneged on his promise only days later, leaving Canadians without an opportunity to

judge for themselves if the trumped-up benefits of the TPP are truly genuine.

For an example of just how bad the TPP is for Canadians, let's take a look at the Intellectual Property (IP) chapter. For years, digital rights experts the world over have been calling it “one of the worst global threats to the Internet.”

The previous government assured Canadians the TPP's changes to copyright law are “fully consistent with Canadian law and policy.” But only days after the announcement by Trade Ministers, the final version of the IP chapter was leaked and it's even worse than we could have imagined.

We now know Canadians will see copyright terms extended by 20 years, robbing the public domain and snatching what experts estimate will be hundreds of millions of dollars out of our pockets every year.

And that's not all: vaguely worded clauses will mean increased Internet censorship complete with content takedowns and website blocking. You could even have your computer seized and destroyed just for ripping your favourite CD onto your computer. Under the TPP, will we even really own what we buy?

The trend here is clear: to replace Canada's balanced copyright rules with a much harsher, US style approach. The fact is that secretive, closed negotiations only benefit those who have a seat at the table. Throughout the negotiations, TPP officials went out of their way to avoid engaging in genuine, citizen stakeholder engagement.

Canadians must demand that our new incoming government reject the TPP's Internet censorship plan. Frankly, the juice just isn't worth the squeeze. ☒

Meghan Sali is Free Expression campaigner with OpenMedia, a community-based organization that safeguards the possibilities of the open Internet.

Next step: proportional representation

– Fair Vote Canada

After an election in which 9,093,630 (51.8%) votes went nowhere, Justin Trudeau has a golden opportunity to bring a more democratic voting system to Canada.

Liberals won a majority with 39.5% of the popular vote and more than half of all voters were unable to cast an effective ballot. They now will wait another four years to have the opportunity to elect a representative aligned with their values – or not.

Fair Vote Canada's executive director declares, “Given the distortion of the popular vote, Trudeau must ensure Canadians will have equal and effective votes in future elections. Never again should we face a one-party, one-man government elected by a minority of voters. We urge you to work with all parties and enact voting rules for a true and modern representative democracy in time for the next election.”

Canadians voted for change. This election was a referendum on the last false-majority government. They coalesced their votes around a promise to end first-past-the-post voting and an opportunity to have a truly democratic voting system that will make all our votes count – only proportional representation can deliver on that promise.

“We urge you, as a top priority for the new government, to establish right away a multi-partisan task force bringing together pro-reform citizens and experts. We are calling on you to design a voting system for Canada in which every ballot delivers equal representation and trust that this process will not seize on a quick fix that favours only centrist parties,” says Jennifer Ross, FVC Caucus Chair for Liberals for Fair Voting.

In total, 51.8% percent of Canadian voters cast votes for losing candidates – with the riding of Pierre-Boucher-Les Patriotes-Verchères casting the most ineffective votes: 71.3 percent. A system of proportional representation could reduce that number to as low as five percent.

All parties are hurt by the outcome of winner-take-all elections across the country: 93.88 % of Green Party Voters couldn't elect a representative. 76.78% of Bloc Voters couldn't elect a representative. 74.5% of NDP voters couldn't elect a representative. 50.98 % of Conservative voters couldn't elect a representative. And, 33.49% of Liberal voters couldn't elect a representative.

Under a proportional system, the seat count would be: LPC: 134. CPC: 108. NDP: 67. BQ: 17. GPC: 12.

In September, over 500 Canadian academics, including several Fellows of the Royal Society of Canada, 29

Never again should we face a
one-party, one-man government
elected by a minority of voters.

Canada Research Chairs and two professors with the Order of Canada, called on all political parties to work together to bring in a proportional electoral system.

Fair Vote Canada and its supporters are asking Justin Trudeau to be brave. We are asking him to lead and put the country and its citizens before his party and build a representative democracy where all Canadians have the opportunity to equally participate in the governance and policy making of our country. We hope he will seize this opportunity to build a country where every citizen is heard, where diversity is respected and where representatives of a popular majority rule. A democratic country. A country we can all proudly call Canada. ☒

Fair Vote Canada is a multi-partisan citizen's campaign, representing 62,000 Canadians advocating for voting system reform. FVC promotes an introduction of an element of proportional representation in elections at all levels of government and in civil society. Source: www.fairvote.ca

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She graduate from Anhui College of Traditional Chinese Medicine in 1985. She has been working in the field of TCM since then. Please call to book your appointment.

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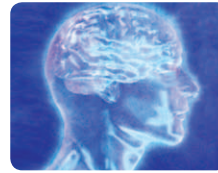
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– Henry David Thoreau

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- **Gordon Brown**

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Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes.
- **Walt Whitman**

NEWSBITES BC campaign encourages consumers to think organic



In September, the organic community, with support from the BC Ministry of Agriculture, unveiled a consumer education campaign that will help BC consumers identify organic products and understand the value behind the organic label.

The initiative is part of the provincial government's three-pillar approach to strengthen the awareness and reputation of BC's organic foods – locally, across Canada and around the world.

Two-thirds of British Columbians already choose organic products weekly, however, consumer confusion remains about the standards and regulation that producers must meet to have the certified organic logo on their product.

"Not all food has the same impact on the world. We are encouraging consumers to Think Before They Eat and learn more about what the labels on their food mean," stated Matthew Holmes, executive director of the Canada Organic Trade Association (www.ota.com/canada-ota)

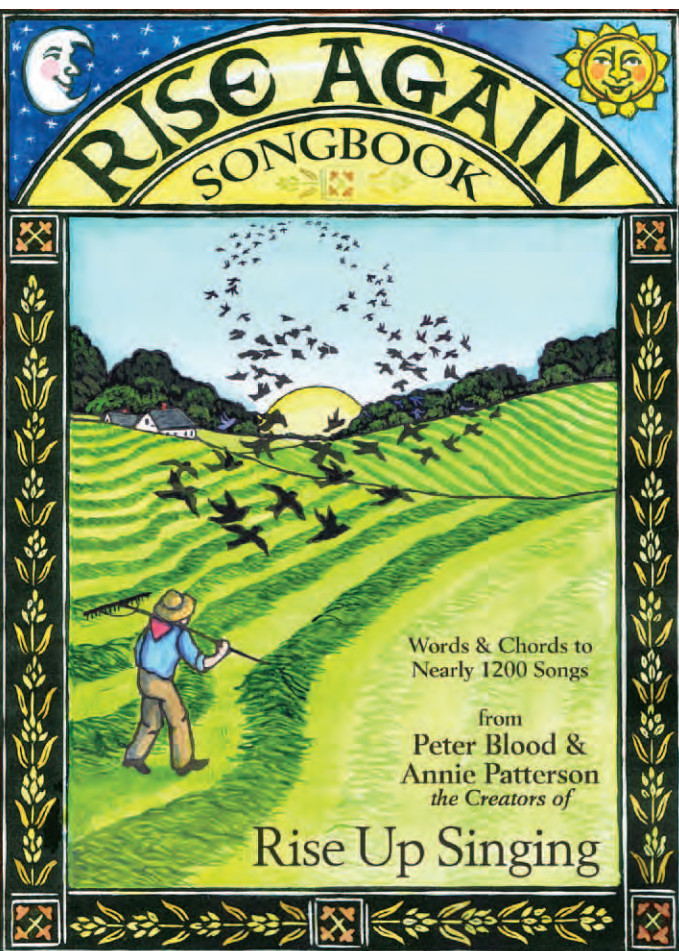
Posters and postcards that invite you to Discover Organic in BC will be popping up in retailers and farmers' markets across the province and more promotions will roll out through 2016.

"The organic industry is very important to British Columbia – both for the economy and specifically for the agriculture sector," said BC Agriculture Minister Norm Letnick. "The majority of BC organic farms are family owned and operated and I encourage consumers to check out the

incredible variety of organic products available throughout the province."

"BC has a diverse and vibrant organic sector and this campaign invites consumers to discover and support local farms and foodmakers that are following organic practices," said Jen Gamble, executive director of Operations from the Certified Organic Associations of British Columbia.

Source: The Canada Organic Trade Association: COTA is the membership-based trade association for the organic sector in Canada, representing growers, shippers, processors, certifiers, farmers associations, distributors, importers, exporters, consultants, retailers and all points along the organic value chain.
www.ota.com/canada-ota



World's best songbook

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the two compact, spiral-bound collections contain lyrics and chords to several thousand popular songs.

The *Rise* songbooks enable singers to follow the same verses, in the same order, with chord cues for accompanists and harmony singers, indexed by artists and subjects for easy access. Their universal acceptance and success not only prove songbook power in our era of Smart-phones and tablets, but they also utilize technology, referencing artist websites and YouTube versions for melodies and more information.

Both *Rise up Singing* and *Rise Again* are the works of a Massachusetts-based Quaker couple, Peter Blood and Annie Patterson, who state, unequivocally and unapologetically, “The goal of our songbooks, music work and website is to encourage group singing in a wide variety of settings...to empower people’s lives, build community, strengthen people’s hope and resilience and help create a just and peaceful world.”

In 1979, they informally published *Winds of the People*, an “underground book” containing not-fully-licensed and public domain songs. It immediately sold 30,000 copies. Encouraged by high demand, they spent years – in the pre-Internet age – painstakingly transcribing albums and even more painfully pursuing permission to publish the lyrics.

“We wanted songs that lent themselves to singing in groups, that were not too obscure, had an emphasis on empowering and positive messages,” they recalled. They never anticipated the reception awaiting *Rise up Singing*, let alone the loud cries for an encore.


“The best, most exhilarating and glorious singing history...more than a lovely songbook...a play-work-fight-freedom hymnal,” opined the late, iconic Studs Terkel. “Worth devouring by all those who love to sing. A true treasure!” added Joan Baez. “Going to make a qualitative difference in music in America,” Pete Seeger, joined in, shortly before his death. (See *Common Ground*’s front cover tribute, March, 2014.)

Blood had edited Seeger’s autobiography, *Where Have All the Flowers Gone: A Singalong Memoir*, and Seeger was instrumental in the song selection and publication of both songbooks. In fact, he claimed the introduction he wrote in *Rise Up Singing* was the best, most widely read composition he ever wrote and he included it in the popular film-bio, *Power of Song*. However, it is his preface to *Rise Again* that really resonates in Seeger’s remarkable legacy and best endorses the songbooks:

“Why is singing good for the planet? Nobody can put it in words. But if there is a human race here in a hundred years, my guess is that one of the main reasons will be we found ways we can sing together – different religions, different languages. The act of singing together makes us realize we’re human beings – we can’t put it in words.

And to a certain extent all the arts are important that way – the dancing arts, the cooking arts, the humour arts.

“But the older I get, the more I’m convinced that, if there’s a human race here, singing will be one of the main reasons why. Singing together, not solo singing. Singing together. Families can sing together and strangers can sing together. People who think they hate each other can sing together. And perhaps if we find the right songs, people so filled with hate they carry a gun with them – we can reach them too. Who knows?”

Rise Again (pub. Hal Leonard) also has much more Canadian content, extending beyond Lightfoot and Buffy Sainte-Marie, as well as about 50 songs on subjects from Laura Secord to Louis Riel and contemporary, semi-obscure compositions of James Keelaghan, Ron Hynes and others. For more information, search *Rise up Songbook*. 

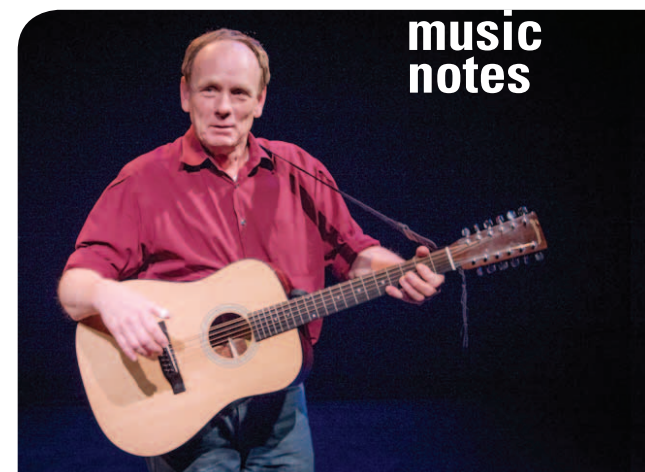
Bruce Mason is a Vancouver and Gabriola Island-based five-string banjo player, gardener, freelance writer and author of *Our Clinic*. brucemason@shaw.ca

As you read this, folks everywhere are singing their way through thumb-worn copies of *Rise up Singing*. First published in 1988 by Sing Out!, this songbook for group sing-alongs has circulated the planet – including China and Russia – without the benefit of commercial publicity or promotion. Now, millions of fans can’t wait to put their hands, voices and instruments to work and play on the *Rise Again Songbook*, the sequel to the best-selling “bible” of songbooks. Over 200 musicians, including Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, Judy Collins, James Taylor and Bruce Springsteen donated the use of their songs for the book. One month after its initial publication, *Rise Again*, with 1,200 additional songs, is in its second printing.

Over 200 musicians, including Bob Dylan, Paul Simon, Judy Collins, James Taylor and Bruce Springsteen donated the use of their songs for the book

Through word of mouth, *Rise up Singing* found its way into hundreds of thousands of living rooms, basements, schools, churches, gathering places and gig bags, including a box the late NDP leader Jack Layton carried around with him – particularly during campaigns – for sing-alongs.

From the Beatles to Broadway, from ballads to Bob, from Blues to British Invasion, including gospel, good time, Surf, protest and Earthcare music and jazz and swing,



Pete Seeger remembered

November 4-14

Firehall Arts Centre

To fully experience the life and music of Pete Seeger, don’t miss **Mark Hellman’s** (pictured) highly recommended, powerful one-man performance, *The Incomplete Folksinger*. For ticket info, visit www.firehallartscentre.ca

Pope Francis’ Pop-Rock Album

And if you still don’t believe in the power of music, check out “rock star” Pope Francis’ prog-rock debut album *Wake Up!* (November 27 release). A review and sample audio track of *Wake Up! Go! Go! Forward!*, are featured in the September issue of *Rolling Stone*. Google: Pope Francis’ Pop-Rock Album



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Events

NOV 4-14

The Incomplete Folksinger: Mark Hellman is Pete Seeger in this Other Guys Theatre Company's adaptation of Seeger's titular work. Firehall Arts Centre, 280 East Cordova St, Vancouver. Tickets: www.firehallartscentre.ca

NOV 6-8

Introduction to Foot Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Introduction 7:30PM \$10; Course \$395 + GST. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818 www.pacificreflexology.com

NOV 7-8

Vancouver Health Show: Over 100 exhibitors displaying the latest trends, products and services. Educational and entertaining seminars. Come with Questions, Leave with Answers. www.thehealthshows.com

NOV 8

The Great Climate Race Vancouver 2015: Runners and walkers welcome. 10k or 2.5k, Stanley Park, Vancouver. Your registration includes a donation to solar projects for Renewable Energy Fund, post-race snacks, theatrics, art, entertainment & more. Register at www.greatclimaterace.org

NOV 8 & 21

Krishnamurti Vancouver Group @ Vancouver Public Library, Board Breakout Room, 350 W. Georgia St. 1-5PM. Free video showing & dialogue! www.meetup.com/Krishnamurti-Vancouver-Group

NOV 14

Putting Joy Back into the Holidays: Enlightened Living FREE Class. 7PM, Meditation & Ecology Centre, 11011 Shell Rd., Richmond. For info & to register: Linda, 604-985-5840. Drop-ins welcome.

NOV 14-15

T & T Spiritual & Wellness Connections invites you to our Yule Christmas Craft & Psychic Fair, 10AM-6PM & 10AM-4PM, 319 North Rd., Coquitlam. Best Western Hotel. tandtvancouver.com

NOV 15

Vibrational Sound & Color presented by the spiritual teacher Raphael De Mohan, 11:30AM,

Banyen Books, 3608 W. 4th Ave., Vancouver. Workshop: "The Power of the Voice," Nov. 23rd. Info: www.vibrationsoundcolor.com

NOV 20-22

Introduction to Ear Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Friday Introduction 7:30PM, \$10; Course \$395 + GST. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818, www.pacificreflexology.com

NOV 21-22

Vancouver Baby & Family Fair: Everything you want to know about having a healthy family. Fun play area for kids, Lots of prizes, seminars. All your Christmas shopping in one show! www.baby-fair.com

NOV 22

Transformation through Meditation: FREE Intro Workshop – Jyoti (Inner Light) Meditation, 2PM, Meditation & Ecology Centre, 11011 Shell Rd., Richmond. Register: 604-985-5840. Drop-ins welcome.

NOV 26

The Art Studios' 18th Annual Winter Sale & Silent Auction: 12-8PM, Heritage Hall, 3102 Main Street. Great items, great prices, great artwork. The Art Studios is a Vancouver Coastal Health community mental health rehabilitation unit in Vancouver. Admission by donation. www.vch.ca/artstudios, 604-871-9788.

NOV 27-29

Living the Inquiries: A workshop with Scott Kilby (www.kiloby.com). At Krishnamurti Educational Centre of Canada. Beautiful ocean-front setting near Victoria. Register at www.krishnamurti-canada.ca, programs@krishnamurti-canada.ca, 250-744-3354.

DEC 2

It's YOUR Wonderful Life: With Clearmind's Duane and Catherine O'Kane, 7:30PM sharp. Unity of Vancouver, 5840 Oak @41st. www.clearmind.com

DEC 5-6

Become a Certified Life Coach or Executive Coach: This 2-day intensive will teach you everything you need to know to succeed. Only Certified Coaches Federation graduates earn the esteemed Certified Life Coach Practitioner designations. In Vancouver. 866-455-2155 or 403-389-1190. www.certifiedcoachesfederation.com

DEC 11-13

Discovering the Nature of Awareness: a Retreat with Rupert Spira, on DVD (www.non-duality.rupertspira.com). At Krishnamurti Educational Centre of Canada. Beautiful ocean-front setting near Victoria. Register at www.krishnamurti-canada.ca, programs@krishnamurti-canada.ca, 250-744-3354.

JAN 23

Seeds: The compelling drama of the four-year legal battle between Saskatchewan farmer Percy Schmeiser and biotech mega-corporation Monsanto Inc. With Eric Peterson (Corner Gas). At the ACT Arts Centre, Main Theatre, 11944 Haney Place, Maple Ridge, 8PM. Tickets/info: www.theactmapleridge.org

ONGOING

Original World hosts handcrafted journeys to traditional cultures: Spirit of Myanmar Feb 5-16 & Sept 28-Oct 9. Bhutan Festivals Mar 23-Apr 4 & Sept 6-18. Treasures of Tibet Apr 4-16 & Sept 18-30. Soul of Sri Lanka Feb 10-23 & Nov 10-23. Info: www.originalworld.com Email: inquire@originalworld.com, (888) 367-6147.

THURSDAYS

Free class, Parkinson's Support Group: 2nd & 4th Thursday each month, 1-2 PM: St. Mary's Anglican Church, 2490 W. 37th Ave. More info: Christina, www.mindfulmovementtherapy.ca, 604-649-8522.

Free Info Sessions at the International College of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Thursdays 2-4PM, Nov 12 & 19, 201-1508 W. Broadway, 604-731-2926. www.tcmcollege.com

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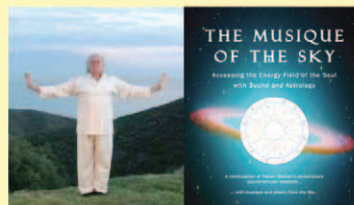
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of the biosphere is literally incalculable – and this is without taking into consideration that other living creatures have the right to exist in and of themselves. The idea that the natural world might have a non-monetary value in which our needs are not factored is neither quantified nor quantifiable. It's a concept that lies outside of the hairless ape's numeracy and parochial ethics.

The assumption that science is a value-free guide into a rational future is just as questionable, as author Derrick Jensen observed in his book *Dreams*:

"The notion that science makes no ethical or moral claims is absurd, I'm surprised otherwise intelligent people so often accept this. First, the *precepts* of science – including the notion that universe is mechanistic, and including the emphasis placed on repeatability (which follows from and reinforces the notion that the universe is mechanistic, or not a wilful decision maker, or not filled with wilful decision-makers) – carry with them extraordinary moral weight, in that they lead to certain behaviours that carry with them moral consequences."

In ancient world views, the world is alive with "wilful subjects with whom you can enter into relationships," the author notes. But regarding these subjects as objects – that is, resources, cogs in the cosmic machinery, or lumps on insensate matter – doesn't just make a pattern of exploitation and collapse possible, but inevitable.

"It's easier to kill a number than an individual, whether we're talking about so many tons of fish, so many board feet of timber, or so many boxcars of *untermenschen*," Jensen concludes.

Abstract thinking has brought immense technical blessings to human beings, extending our lifespans through medicine and sanitation, while pushing the biosphere to its limits. It has allowed our technocratic priesthood to build and destroy with greater skill and at greater scales. As British novelist Aldous Huxley once observed, "Applied science is a conjuror, whose bottomless hat yields impartially the softest of Angora rabbits and the most petrifying of Medusas."

But expect no commissions of enquiry, no truth and reconciliation reports, on the darker side of our ability to name and number, to sow and reap, and to give or take life. The scripture of the 'Temple of Abstraction' is embedded in textbooks, newspapers, television news, annual company reports – and hidden in plain sight in our hearts and minds. ◀

reminders of what we have destroyed. The field journals of the Okanagan grasslands describe the quiet diggings of badgers under a full moon journals describing the Ootsa, the Kootenay and the Peace River valleys are ghost landscapes. Much of it now lies underwater from hydro-electric projects. Field notes from the Mackenzie delta or the forests of Vancouver Island tell us what was there before dams, highways, pipelines, logging and mining carved up the landscape. The journal of the fauna of Point Grey or Richmond points to a Vancouver that is almost unrecognizable. The journals also give us some sense of what could be restored should we have the inclination. In some cases, like the islands off the central coast, we have a benchmark that hasn't changed so drastically, accentuating the importance of these last intact ecosystems, allowing us to celebrate the restoration of populations like the Humpback Whales...

Because Cowan had seen more flora and fauna around

British Columbia than virtually any human being could have before or will again, his stock of stories was almost inexhaustible. He also witnessed the impacts of overhunting, pollution, pesticides, logging, dam construction, oil and gas development and climate change that pointed to an increasingly impoverished future.

Not surprisingly, he was always one of the first – if not the first – to raise the alarm. As Canadians, we haven't done a good job of crediting our scientists as leaders, prophets or innovators of ideas. As one interviewee noted, if Cowan had been born in the United States, he would have been a household name. ◀

Excerpted from **The Real Thing: The Natural History of Ian McTaggart Cowan** by Briony Penn, Rocky Mountain Books, www.cowan-therealthing.com Now in bookstores.

Private Lessons

Cowan left the files containing the privately published *Lessons* and correspondence [of a secret society] as part of his personal collection, appropriately labelled 'B.' The 'B's' network was widespread and they built upon already existing societies, fraternities, professional associations and friendships around North America to extend and strengthen their influence. Cowan landed right into their circle from his teenage years onwards. For an impressionable and expansive young mind, gaining entry to this cohort at a formative time was critical in every way.

The experiences of the 'B' guided Cowan through his own life. Attacks on scientists had come from highly influential corporate interests for a century and were to continue for the rest of his life. His response would echo his mentors: work quietly through networks. In 1984, he was still active in challenging a round of serious budget cuts to the Canadian Wildlife Service. In a letter to a colleague, he writes, "I understand that the assistant deputy minister is the man responsible. His background is agriculture and he looks upon wildlife as a nuisance value at best."

That same year, his student and close friend Bristol Foster made a big splash on the front page of the provincial capital newspaper when he resigned his post as director of the Ecological Reserves Unit after a decade. The headline read, "B.C.-muzzled Expert Quits Ecology Post." A change in government to conservative interests had brought a sea change



photo by Debra Brash, *Times Colonist*

to the unit, and Foster, a mammalogist and PhD student of Cowan's, wrote, "We're told no more public speaking... no more proselytizing – that's the word they're using – no more promoting ecological reserves... But they really want bureaucrats – grey, clawless, pussycats – who just do quietly what they're told..."

In a 2001 interview, Cowan detected another cycle of suppression of scientists: "At the moment, we are going through a swing and I don't see where that swing is going to end, because the boundary is getting farther and farther to the ultraconservative. Those are the sort of people who will say, 'What value is a grizzly anyway?' If you ask that question, you are certainly labeling yourself as totally without knowledge of the world in which you live."

Cowan was responding this time to a wave of new attacks sparked by material such as *Off Limits: How Radical Environmentalists Are Stealing Canada's National Parks*, which

had just been published by the right-wing "think tank" Fraser Institute. In it, the authors attacked Leopold, Muir and contemporary colleagues of Cowan like his friend Monty Hummel. The Fraser Institute was using language almost identical to that used by their forebears from the previous century: "...some of these eccentric opinions, which may or may not be held by individual environmentalists, do not provide a sound foundation for the development and implementation of sensible public policy concerning Canada's national parks.

We will see that efforts to formulate a coherent parks policy on the basis of a kind of mystic ecocentrism introduces several additional and unnecessary constraints."

The "unnecessary constraints" were any species, ecosystem or culture that may stand in the way of resource extraction. The exposure of any kind of emotional connection to the natural world was and continues to be the first line of attack by those interested in removing the obstacles to resources. The attacks on credibility were only too well known by traditional subsistence hunters as well. The desire by the 'B' to protect subsistence economies laid the groundwork for upholding constitutional rights of indigenous people to hunt. In his work in the Mackenzie Delta in 1947, and in his subsequent projects in the North as oil and gas began impacting hunter lifestyles, Cowan would be a strong advocate along with his colleague Justice Thomas Berger. ◀

When people lead, politicians follow ...or fall!

by Joseph Roberts

The true honour in the recent election goes to Canadians who saw through the deception and destruction of Harper's regime. The leadership debates were for the most part: guarded, vacuous and stiff, with very little inspiration. The staging made a pretence of neutrality, was male biased, gave Harper centre stage and the best camera angles – straight on rather than side views – were unflattering to Mulcair and quirky for Trudeau. Plus on the Munk Debate (think Barrick Gold and John Baird funding or sponsorship) the back-drop was Conservative blue. But all of the fixing and manipulation didn't work because the people of Canada had organized themselves in amazing ways.

For the first time, NGO groups had analyzing and organizing tools previously reserved for political party operatives. Our love of Canada, ethical governance and true national heart's desire to protect environmental well-being, were directly expressed, communicated and shared with powerful impact locally and nationally.

Through independent media - not controlled by the corporate political complex which traditionally manipulated the vote – we were free to express our disgust of the Harper-fronted Tar Sands corporatists and undemocratic 12th century First Past the Post (FPTP) electoral system. Hint: when the ruling class invented FPTP 900 hundred years ago it wasn't intended to create democracy. And now just three countries are still stuck with it in the Western world: the UK, USA and Canada. It's time to modernize and democratize our electoral system.

To that end, groups such as Lead Now, Vote Together, Rabble, Dogwood Alliance, Council of Canadians, Fair Vote Canada and others, independently organized millions of voters.

Exciting new oxygen for real people filled the air, as inspired artists created and sang strong and clear messages of democracy: Stop Harper, Protect the Environment, support CBC, unmuzzle our scientists, allow MPs to serve their constituents and speak freely, and resuscitate Canada's image worldwide as a peace-keeper rather than instilling ignorance, fear and war-mongering. We, the people of Canada, became the change we wanted to see in the world, rather than blindly continue "Harper's Government" of hatred and hubris.

We became the media, by participating in new forms of communicating, joining and funding independent grassroots groups with clear goals dedicated to getting rid of Harper and determined to establish an equitable and fair, propor-

tional representational electoral system for our next election. Common Ground continually informed and educated during "the dark years" of Harper's nine-year neo-conservative reign. Common Ground took a powerful position dedicating both our September STOP HARPER cover edition, and our October GO VOTE special feature to the cause. Common Ground launched both our regular CG West and the new CG East in Ontario with these two strategic issues. The publisher's team spent six weeks from Toronto to Ottawa, distributing these special Common Ground Ontario magazines, reaching about a quarter million new readers over the two month period. We wanted people to be informed and know what they are voting for. There have been too many low-information voters easily manipulated by mass media. They do not have the informed edge to be able to see through the fog of political propaganda. *Common Ground Ontario* was freely distributed in many swing ridings and was available on all 63 racks in the Toronto Subway System. CG East was a warmly-welcomed, a fresh new independent face encouraging people to vote smartly.

It wasn't a red wave that swept across Canada, though the Liberal Party certainly was the benefactor of this people's movement to save Canada from the extractionist "don't care, don't share" corporate agenda.

Let's honour the ethics and principles of Canadians who did not take the bait on Harper's fear hook. Neo-cons played to the lowest denominators of fear and loss of money that their wizards and foreign consultants spun to catch voters in their negative

web. They called it wrong to support any party but Harper's Conservatives. While serving Mammon, everything associated with money is most important. Graciously, Canadians had other values and voted for change and to move to higher ground.

It was an election designed to be won by attrition, with those calling the writ believing they could out-spend and out-last their opponents. Ha, it back fired on them, big time.

The last act of their \$25 million fear campaign was to wrap daily newspapers from coast to coast to coast with a yellow coloured scary jacket proclaiming that if you



October: The Solution



September: The Problem

vote Liberal or NDP it would cost you too much. Well their con didn't work because people in Canada had found their own common ground and it wasn't based on fear. A fear campaign was not going to trick us into giving up our freedom by voting for Harper's promise of protection.

Harper, who was trolling for his base of low information, easily scared voters, wrapped his final message on a shocking yellow and black warning that

Trudeau and Mulcair would "cost us too much". However, we educated ourselves during the last long nine years and their final, grueling, longest-ever election campaign. We had figured Harper out. It was he who had already cost us dearly. And we read the best before date which had expired a decade ago.

An additional shame came from what used to be esteemed journals, now inserted in their client's yellow fear flyers. Canada is coming into its own. Citizens saw through the multinational oil shill, called Harper pimping for the Tar Sands and ignoring climate and environmental destruction. Voters rejected the deceit. We now need to stay awake. We must be equally perceptive with the incoming government, vigilant that they don't get seduced by the "dark side". We also need a full court press to make certain to improve the electoral system. Because, when a new government gets handed a majority with only 39% of the popular vote, whether as it was the Conservatives in 2011 or the Liberals in 2015, we have a false majority. The other 61% are dispossessed of any effective representation and power.

The only safe place for democracy is not based in leaders or parties, but in the people of Canada themselves. And great MPs understand this. Unsung people are the true heroes of the election, not just those who attracted the most votes.

Justin Trudeau said he had listened to the people of Canada and that gave him the winning edge. Now with a healthy dose of Canadian humility and compassion, he needs to obey the electorates' cautious support and cherished wishes. He must deliver the promised more modern, fairer, electoral system in which all people votes are honoured and have value. Where a majority of the popular vote gets a true and proportional majority, where 30% of the vote get about 30% of the seats in parliament, and yes where 20% gets 20% or 10% gets 10%. Because basically Canadians are fair and desire fairness in our governance. That is the "real change" the majority of Canadians want and voted for. And it is this "real change" that is Job One for Justin Trudeau. <



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